

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A method of enhancing lignification in a vascular plant, comprising introducing into the vascular plant a plant promoter operably linked to an exogenous nucleic acid ~~at least 50 base pairs long~~, wherein the exogenous nucleic acid encodes a polypeptide fragment at least 75% identical to the K, I or C domains of SEQ ID NO:2 ~~SEQ ID NO:1~~, thereby suppressing expression of an AGL8-like gene product at least 50% identical to SEQ ID NO:2 and enhancing lignification.

41-65. (Canceled)

66. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein the AGL8-like gene product comprises SEQ ID NO:2.

67. (Currently amended) The method of claim 40, wherein the promoter is operatively linked to the polynucleotide in the sense orientation ~~comprising introducing into the plant a promoter operatively linked in the sense orientation to a polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide at least 75% identical to SEQ ID NO:2, thereby suppressing expression of the AGL8-like gene product.~~

68. (Currently amended) The method of claim 40, wherein the promoter is operatively linked to the polynucleotide in the antisense orientation ~~comprising introducing into the plant a promoter operatively linked in the antisense orientation to a polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide at least 75% identical to SEQ ID NO:2, thereby suppressing expression of the AGL8-like gene product.~~

69. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein said vascular plant is a woody plant.

70. (Previously presented) The method of claim 69, wherein said woody plant is selected from the group consisting of Eucalyptus, cottonwood, alder, Douglas fir, Hemlock, pine and spruce.

71. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein said vascular plant is a leguminous plant.

72. (Previously presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said leguminous plant is selected from the group consisting of alfalfa, clover, lucerne, birdsfoot trefoil, Stylosanthes, Lotononis bainesii and sainfoin.

73. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein said vascular plant is a forage grass.

74. (Previously presented) The method of claim 73, wherein said grass is selected from the group consisting of bahiagrass, bermudagrass, dallisgrass, pangolagrass, big bluestem, indiagrass, switchgrass, smooth brome grass, orchardgrass, timothy, Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue.

75. (Currently amended) A transgenic plant characterized by enhanced lignification, the transgenic plant comprising a promoter operatively linked to an exogenous nucleic acid ~~at least 50 base pairs long~~, wherein the exogenous nucleic acid encodes a polypeptide fragment at least 75% identical to the K, I or C domains of SEQ ID NO:2 ~~SEQ ID NO:1~~, and wherein expression of an endogenous AGL8-like gene product at least 50% identical to SEQ ID NO:2 in the plant is reduced.

76. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant of claim 75, wherein the promoter is operatively linked to the polynucleotide in the sense orientation.

77. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant of claim 75, wherein the promoter is operatively linked to the polynucleotide in the antisense orientation.

78. (Previously presented) A tissue derived from a transgenic plant of claim 75.

79. (New) The method of claim 40, wherein the polypeptide fragment comprises the K or C domains of SEQ ID NO:2.

80. (New) The method of claim 40, wherein the polypeptide fragment comprises the K or C domains of SEQ ID NO:2.